

Based on the book
Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

By Mo Willems

Published by Hyperion Books for Children

Script By Mo Willems and Mr. Warburton

Lyrics by Mo Willems

Music by Deborah Wicks La Puma

Dramaturgy by Megan Alrutz

DON'T LET THE PIGEON DRIVE THE BUS

Is presented through special arrangement
from Music Theater International (MTI).

All authorized performance materials are
also supplied by MTI.

www.mtishows.com

December 2025, April-June 2026



This play was commissioned by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and was first produced at the Kennedy Center during the 2019-2020 season.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Whatever you do, don't let the Pigeon star in his own musical production! With a script written by Mo Willems, the creator of the #1 New York Times best-selling, Caldecott Honor award-winning "Pigeon" picture books, and featuring music by Deborah Wicks La Puma (*Elephant and Piggie's We Are in a Play!*), *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!* is even more fun than staying up late and having a hot dog party!

It's not easy being the Pigeon-you never get to do ANYTHING! But when the Bus Driver has a crisis that threatens to make her passengers (gasp!) late, maybe that wily bird CAN do something.

Featuring an innovative mix of songs, and feathers, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!* is sure to get everyone's wings flapping.

ABOUT LICM THEATER

Long Island Children's Museum Theater is a professional family theater at the heart of the museum. We offer a range of performance styles for families and schools including musicals, plays, puppetry, dance and music. Our high-quality live performances celebrate audience interactivity, are often literature based, and always tell a great story.



Question Quest! What is the difference between live theater and a movie? Have you ever seen a live theater performance? What do you do when you see something on stage that you like? Do you clap? Cheer? Smile?

Click Further: [Watch Rachel Harry explain how theatre education can change the world.](#)

Who You Will See...

Fun Fact – Our Cast Members are all professional actors.

The Cast

Pigeon: Finn MacDevitt/Austin Sidito

Bus Driver: Josie McSwane

Business person / Hot Dog Vendor:
Rosie Allenson

Bus Engine / Duckling: Zarina Nudalo Cameron

Teenager / Construction Worker: Austin Sidito
Finn MacDevitt

Little Old Lady – Lisa Rudin

ASM/Swing: Amy Herzberg

ASM/Swing: Erin Flanagan

CREATIVE TEAM

Director – Austin M. Costello

Musical Director - Willard Meeks, Jr.

Choreographer - Lisa Rudin

Puppet Artist - Austin Costello

Assistant Puppet Builders - Christina Litvatis,
Claudia Zurek

Percussionist - Michael Leuci

Bassist - Rich Hefner

Know Before You Go

Pigeon is so glad you are here! He needs your help so everyone can have a great time during the show! He (and Theater Management) would appreciate it if you could:

Please turn off or silence cell phones while in the theater. Pigeon forgets his lines when he hears a cell phone go off.

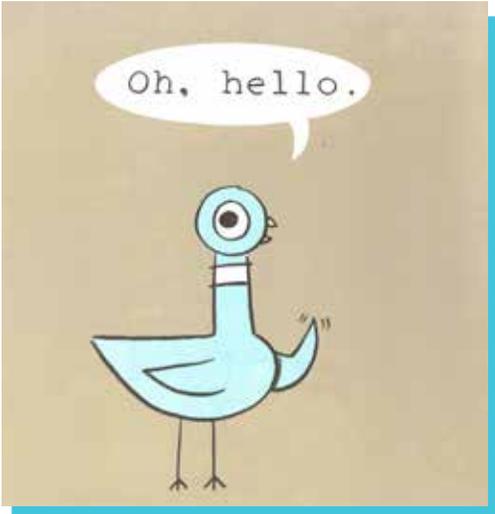


Image by Mo Willems

Please do not record or take pictures of the show. It's strictly prohibited by law. Also, Pigeon will demand royalties.

Please do not eat or drink in the theater. Pigeon doesn't like having to mop up spills between shows (bottled water is ok).

Pigeon might ask you to change your seat (well, he will send Theatre Management) because a big group or a person with a disability might need it, or for some other reason. Pigeon assures you that he is a stellar performer that can be seen from anywhere in the theater.

Please be aware that Pigeon and his fellow performers may come out into the aisles. They want to sing and dance with you!

ENJOY THE SHOW!

Themes in Our Production

The Pigeon Experiences Big Emotions

In our show, The Pigeon experiences different emotions, for example: joy, happiness, longing, disappointment, sadness, boredom, anger and jealousy.

Can you identify different emotions? Try this game! (courtesy of BBBpress.com)

1. Put slips of paper with different emotions written on them into a bowl.
2. Depending on the size of your group, ask up to three kids to come to the front of the room.
3. One of the kids picks an emotion slip from the bowl and shows it to the other two, or if there is only one child playing, they keep it a secret.
4. As you slowly countdown from 10 to 1, the children should demonstrate that emotion using their bodies and their faces.
5. Ask the group to guess which emotion they think is being demonstrated and what gave away that emotion.

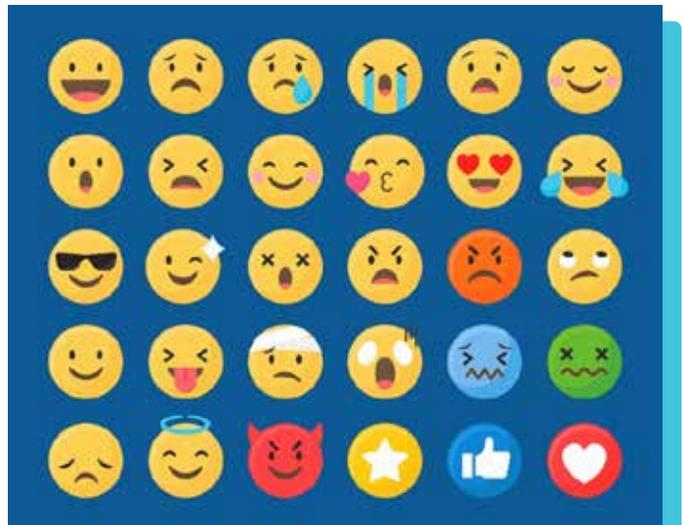


Photo credit: Image by rawpixel.com

List of emotions:

Friendly, Angry, Sad, Embarrassed, Frustrated, Annoyed, Eager, Shy, Nervous, Loving, Confident, Proud, Curious, Fascinated, Excited, Energetic, Surprised, Grateful, Touched, Hopeful, Happy, Peaceful.

The Pigeon is Persistent

Persistent: *to keep going, especially despite opposition, obstacles and discouragement.*

The Pigeon wants to drive the bus so bad! The Pigeon tries different ways to convince the Bus Driver to let them drive the bus. The Pigeon asks nicely, is demanding, offers money, and even tells the Bus Driver it would be a dream come true. Sometimes, persistence pays off and you can get what you want when you keep trying. Has there ever been something that you wanted, really, really, badly? What did you do to try and get it? Did your efforts succeed?

Show what happened: Using crayons or colored pencils, draw a picture of what you wanted, and then what happened when you asked for it.

Question Quest! The Pigeon gets disappointed that we won't let him drive the bus. Do you ever get disappointed when you don't get something you want? If so, what do you do about it?



Photo credit: Image by studio4art on freepik

Helping a Friend When They are Sad

The Bus Driver is a good friend to The Pigeon when they are upset. The Bus Driver listens to The Pigeon and helps them to feel better. Sometimes when someone is upset, they feel better when they get to tell someone about it and know that the person is really listening to them.

Here is a game to help practice good listening skills:

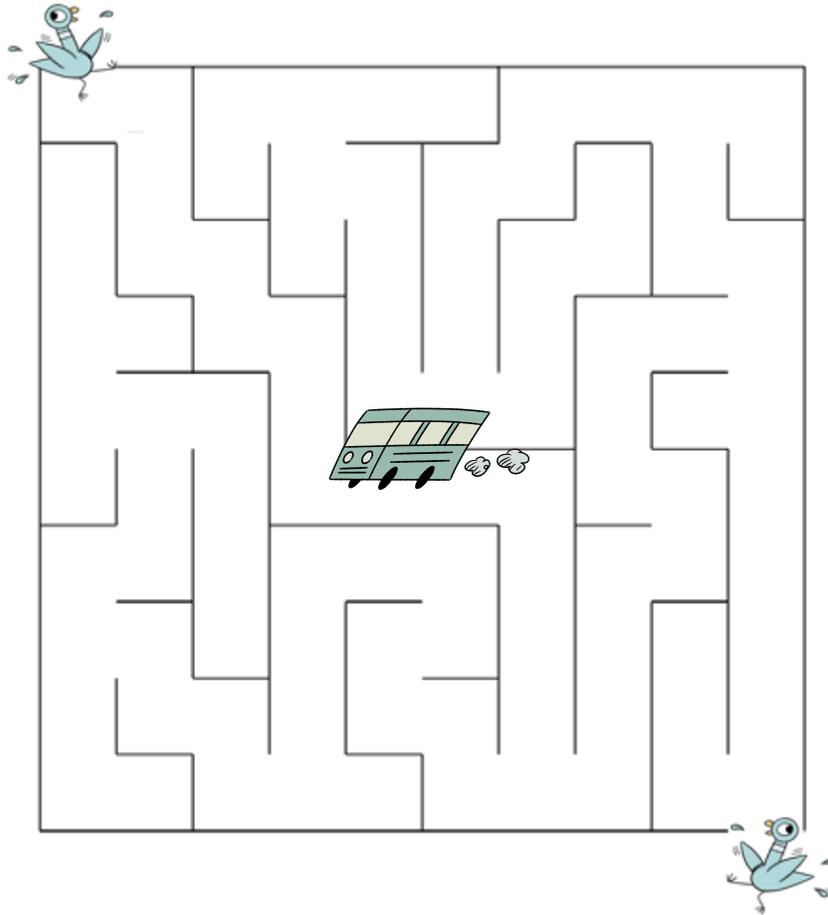
Find a partner. The first person talks about a topic for 30 seconds. It could be something they are interested in or like to do. Maybe they collect baseball cards, or love video games, or have a favorite sport or book. When 30 seconds are up, the second person repeats back three things (or more) that they heard. Then switch the listener and the talker. The goal is to strengthen your listening skills and learn something new about your partner. This activity can be done with two kids or with an adult and a child.

Question Quest! What are some other ways you can help a friend who is upset?

There's More Than One Road

The Bus Driver loves driving the bus every day. The Bus Driver is very proud of the job. They didn't always want to be a bus driver, though. They wanted to do something else, but wasn't able to do that. The Bus Driver was sad, until they found that bus driving, although different, was just as fulfilling. The Bus Driver helps to teach The Pigeon that there is more than one way to achieve your goals.

Can you help The Pigeon reach the bus? There is more than one way to get there!



How to Help The Pigeon (and You) Relax

The Bus Driver helps the passengers to relax when they get panicky by asking them all to take deep breaths. Another activity that often helps people to calm down and relax is yoga.

Did you know that there is a yoga pose called the Pigeon? Learn how to do it [here](#).



Photo credit: Image by brgfx on freepix.com

All About Pigeons

Just like the character of The Pigeon, real pigeons are pretty cool, too! Pigeons are highly intelligent birds. Did you know that there are four million pigeons in NYC?

- They are able to recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet.
- They can recognize themselves in the mirror. Most species cannot do this, even cats and dogs!
- Pigeons see in color and can also see ultraviolet light, which is a type of electromagnetic radiation that comes from the sun. Humans cannot see ultraviolet light. The ultraviolet light makes their feathers more reflective. We cannot even tell!
- Pigeons can fly at altitudes of 6,000 feet or higher. That's higher than the city of Denver!
- They can fly at speeds between 77 and 92 miles per hour. That's faster than cars are allowed to drive on the parkway!
- They can fly between 600 and 700 miles in a single day! That's the distance between New York and North Carolina!
- They can differentiate between different people in a photograph.



Photo credit: Image by brgfx on freepix.com

Carrier Pigeons

Did you know that throughout history, pigeons were used to carry messages because they can find their way home when taken long distances away. Messages are attached to the pigeon's leg in a little rolled up tube, or sometimes they wear a tiny backpack!

In 1896, regular air mail service was provided to Great Barrier Island by Mr. Howie's Pigeon-Post from a suburb of Auckland, New Zealand. Pigeons were also used during wartime to help get messages to troops without being detected by the enemy. During World War I, a carrier pigeon working for France, named Cher Ami, was awarded a medal for his heroic service for delivering 12 important messages.

We can't fly like a pigeon can, but here's a way to send a secret message to a friend.

All you need is a piece of white paper, a white crayon, and some watercolor paint. Watch this [video](#) for instructions.

Fun Facts About Buses

One of the characters in “Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!” is the Bus itself! In our production, the bus engine’s noises are performed by an actor, and therefore the bus is given a personality, just like The Pigeon and all the other characters. But what about real buses?



Some fun facts about bus history and NYC buses:

The first mass-transport service was started in France in 1823 by Stanislas Baudry. He started a horse-drawn transport service from the city of Nantes to the spa he had opened. However, most people that used his transport service used it just for a ride and not to go to his spa. So, being a savvy businessman, he closed the spa and started a bus business! It was called “omnibus.” He followed up his success in Nantes, with ones in Paris, Manchester and 10 in London in 1829.

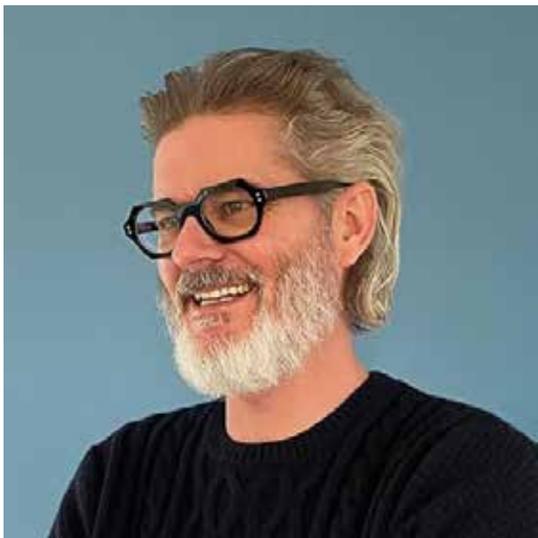
In New York City, the first bus, also called “omnibus,” was introduced around 1830. It was a horse-drawn over-size stagecoach that was big enough to hold about 12 people. When people wanted to get on, they would wave their arms in the air to signal the driver to stop. When they wanted to get off at their stop, they would let the driver know by pulling on a leather strap that was attached to his ankle!

Today we have almost 6,000 buses in NYC! The buses are powered by gas and are being converted to electric. Over a million people ride the bus every day!

Make your own cardboard bus!

Get ready to enjoy hours of pretend play as you make your own [cardboard bus](#).

About Mo Willems



Mo Willems is an author, illustrator, animator and playwright. He was the inaugural Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence (2019-2022), and he continues to collaborate in creating fun new stuff involving classical music, opera, comedy concerts, dance, painting and digital works with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera, Ben Folds, Yo-Yo Ma, and others.

Willems is best known for his #1 New York Times bestselling picture books, which have been awarded three Caldecott Honors (Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!; Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale; Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity), and his celebrated Elephant and Piggie early reader series, which has been awarded two Theodor Geisel Medals and five Geisel Honors.

Mo’s art has been exhibited around the world, including major solo retrospectives at the High Museum (Atlanta) and the New-York Historical Society (NYC). Over the last decade, Willems has become the most produced playwright of Theater for Young Audiences in America, having written or co-written four musicals based on his books.

He began his career as a writer and animator on PBS' Sesame Street, where he garnered six Emmy Awards (writing). Other television work includes two series on Cartoon Network: Sheep in the Big City (creator + head writer) and Codename: Kids Next Door (head writer). Mo's recent TV projects include the live action comedy special Don't Let the Pigeon Do Storytime! and an animated rock opera special based on Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed, which premiered on HBO Max. In April 2023, Mo celebrated the 20th anniversary of Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! with the publication of Be the Bus: The Lost & Profound Wisdom of The Pigeon (Union Square Kids, April 4, 2023), a humor book for adults, and Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! 20th Anniversary Edition (Hyperion Books for Children, April 4, 2023) including an exclusive board game. His papers reside at Yale University's Beinecke Library.

See an interview with Mo [here](#).
Enjoy some fun [activities](#) with The Pigeon.

Making Connections



TotSpot

In Pigeon, the characters in the show are members of a community: a hot dog vendor, a bus driver, a businessman, a construction worker. The show takes place in a city park. TotSpot is a little town where children can explore a community.

Perfect for crawlers, cruisers and toddlers, our little town celebrates the work people do in our communities. A lighthouse, farmer's market, post office, train station and more spark the youngest imaginations.

Tool Box

In the show, the bus breaks down, and the Bus Driver needs to use some tools to fix it. You can have some fun with tools and gears as well!

This gallery explores the big idea of "What is a Tool?" as well as the process of using tools and applying the six simple machines. In this unique space, children can use actual, grown-up tools including hammers and nails for children ages five years and up. Younger children can make their own creations with glue and other age-appropriate tools at the craft table. As simple as a stick or as specialized as a computer keyboard, anything that helps you complete a task is a tool.



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